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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000409

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#) [KTER](#)

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS PROTEST AGAINST ISRAEL AND U.S. IRAQ POLICY; ISLAMIST ARRESTED FOR CALLING THE TRAINING OF IRAQIS IN JORDAN "TRAITOROUS"

REF: AMMAN 389

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) A non-violent demonstration held January 16 in Amman garnered several hundred Jordanians who protested against Israeli policies and the U.S. presence in Iraq. In contravention of parameters pre-arranged with the GOJ, several demonstrators held up pictures of Saddam Hussein and Iraqi flags, while the Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Controller General, Hammam Sa'id, accused the GOJ of a "traitorous act" for allowing the training of Iraqi police and military units in Jordan. Prime Minister Fayed told Ambassador that Sa'id, whose comments do not reflect popular opinion, would be charged in a civilian court with defaming the King and the government, and that the GOJ would continue its strong support for Iraq-related training programs. End Summary.

TAKING TO THE STREETS

12. (C) On January 16, a government-sanctioned march took place in Amman to show support for the Palestinian intifada and to condemn U.S. occupation of Iraq. The march began outside the complex of the Jordanian Professional Associations, the primary organizers of the demonstration, and made its way to the main United Nations facility in Jordan, a commonly-used rally route. While some press reports put the number of demonstrators at 2,000, local police numbered the participants at no more than "several hundred."

13. (U) The demonstrators loudly condemned Israel for its treatment of Palestinians, pledged their support for the intifada, and called for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Jordan. The crowd also chanted anti-U.S. slogans and demanded that American troops withdraw from Iraq, while at the same time praising the "Iraqi resistance." In his address to the demonstrators, the head of the Professional Associations, Dr. Mohammad Oran, stressed that Arabs do not consider the American people as an enemy, but called on Americans to object to the U.S. administration's policies in the region.

STEPPING OVER THE LINE

14. (C) In granting permission for the march, the GOJ laid down several rules and made clear to organizers that demonstrators were to confine their protests to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the U.S. presence in Iraq. Several demonstrators strayed outside these "red lines," however, by showing support for former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein by prominently displaying his picture. More notably, as the Deputy Controller General of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hammam Sa'id, performed Friday prayers for the crowd, he accused the GOJ of committing a "traitorous act" by allowing the training of Iraqi police and military units on Jordanian soil. Sa'id also denounced the Iraqi Governing Council as a tool of the U.S. occupation and rejected any dealings with it.

15. (C) Commenting on Sa'id's speech, Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayed told the Ambassador and Polcouns January 19 that Sa'id had stepped over the line. Fayed said that Sa'id had been arrested, released, and would be charged with defaming the King and government by accusing them of treason. Fayed stated that he had asked the Muslim Brotherhood in discussions last fall what he should do if they stepped over the line in their public actions or statements. They had replied "take us to civilian court," and that is exactly what Fayed said he intended to do with Sa'id. Fayed reaffirmed the GOJ's commitment to continue training of Iraqi police and military personnel as the best way to help Iraqis govern themselves.

COMMENT

16. (C) The government-sanctioned march is another example of the new "political openness" in Jordan (see reftel), but at the same time shows that this openness has definite limits. In line with pledges for greater political expression, the GOJ allowed Jordanians an opportunity to express condemnation of Israeli policies affecting Palestinians and, to a lesser extent, public opposition to the U.S. presence in Iraq. Sa'id's scathing attack against official GOJ policy on Iraq, and by extension the decisions of King Abdullah, went too far, however, and does not reflect popular opinion.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
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GNEHM